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ABSTRACT

        Collaborative initiatives between schools and voluntary
organizations and between schools and the community service provided by local
authorities were examined in 10 case studies of different community education
"locations" across Scotland. The case studies, which identified examples of
effective practice in collaboration and joint provision between schools and
community education, focused on the following categories of activity: school-
home-community links; health education; work with troubled young people; and
adult education. The following factors were identified as contributing to
effective collaboration: (1) added value from collaboration; (2) extended
range of provision due to collaboration; and (3) complementarity in
provision. The case studies documented how one and the same collaborative
activity conducted in different schools may be underpinned by rather
different values, have different purposes, define tasks differently in order
to realize those purposes, and delivery community education under a variety
of conditions. The following challenges arose during the collaborative
initiatives: tensions between those committed primarily to supporting pupils'
academic achievement and those whose aim was to increase involvement of the
wider community; conflicting perspectives regarding parent involvement;
competing professional cultures and traditions; and lack of time and money.
Despite these constraints, the collaborative initiatives yielded important
benefits to pupils and the wider community. (Contains 11 references.) (MN)

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ED 467 907

Educating and Learning Collaboratively Schools and Their Communities

Schools and Collaborative Practice

This paper reports on a study of collaborative initiatives between schools and voluntary organisations and between schools and the community education service provided by local authorities. It examines ten case studies of different community education »locations« based on schools which were selected because they had taken part in at least one collaborative activity. Representatives of the partners and participants in the collaborative activity including the headteacher and teachers, parents and pupils, local authority managers, community and voluntary workers were interviewed in each of the ten localities. A case study design was chosen as it provided a means of focusing on individual sets of complex relationships between schools and community education within the specific policy context of their local authority and allowed for the exploration of perceptions of the relationship as experienced by the different players in each location.

The case studies identified examples of effective practice in collaboration and joint provision between schools and community education which focused on four different categories of activity: school-home-community links; health education; work with troubled young people; adult education. These activities were known to be providing challenging opportunities for partnership and collaboration in many schools as they frequently required particular kinds of expertise which most teachers do not have. Moreover, these activities were areas of policy interest when the research was undertaken in 1998. The study found that in general there were three principal factors which contributed to effective collaboration:

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- Added value from collaboration: effective collaboration was sustained where all partners were able to achieve »more« with »less«. This was exemplified in the adult education activities where resources of space, facilities and staff expertise had been used to provide more opportunities for both adults and pupils;
- Extended range of provision due to collaboration: only through collaboration in the health education programmes and the home-school-community projects were providers able to offer sufficient breadth in the scale and scope of interventions;
- Complementarity in provision: the most demanding form of collaboration was required to deal with situations involving complex social issues such as social exclusion, defined by the European Community (1993) as: *the multiple and changing factors resulting in people being excluded from the normal exchanges, practices and rights of modern society.* In particular work with troubled young people required multi-organisational approaches.

It was hypothesised that organisations would need to share, or have complementary, values, purposes, tasks and conditions for collaboration to be effective, and for satisfactory partnerships to be developed. This was confirmed by the research which showed how ostensibly the same collaborative activity may
- be underpinned by rather different values;
- have different purposes;
- define tasks differentially in order to realise these purposes;
- deliver community education under a variety of conditions.

Figure 1 below summarises these key differences by comparing the same activity in different case study schools, in terms of values, purposes, tasks and conditions. Thus partners working together may have conflicting values and purposes: they may see the task differently and they may be operating under different conditions.

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Figure 1: Summary of key differences in the activities

	Adult Education	Health Education	Home-School-Community Links	Troubled Young People
Values	Pro-actively promoting equality of opportunity vs. Reactively responding to community	Achieving measurable educational outcomes vs. Collaboration to achieve academic and social goals	Meeting needs of parents as well as children vs. Parents' role to be involved in education of children	Social and academic education for all vs. Academic education for majority
Purposes	Providing education for pupils vs. Providing for whole community	Promoting sense of community vs. Providing information	promoting parents' own education vs. Supporting children's education	Involving young people in decision-making vs. Minimising effect of problematic behaviour
Tasks	Providing responsive education vs. School focused education	Active collaboration vs. Providing services	Community education best able to involve parents vs. Headteacher best able to involve parents	Developing all pupils socially and academically vs. Sub-contracting out of difficult pupils
Conditions	Provision of programme vs. Participation in decision-making	Promoting academic standards vs. Promoting safe and friendly environment for all	Utilising skills of identified community worker vs. No additional staff resources available to school	Collaborative sharing of expertise vs. Complementarity of expertise

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The study highlighted some of the resultant tensions between potential partners:

-   In adult education activities there were tensions between those committed primarily to supporting the academic achievement of pupils and those whose aim additionally was to increase the involvement of the wider community.
-   In the projects designed to promote home-school-community links there were conflicting perspectives of parent involvement: for some, there was an expectation that parents would learn to extend an interest in the development of their own children's education by learning how to work as unpaid classroom helpers; for others, the emphasis was placed on the recognition of the parent's own educational needs and the development of appropriate learning experiences for the parent as an individual.
-   Another constraint to effective collaboration was the competing professional cultures and traditions which limited the type of collaboration considered feasible and this was evident in the health education projects.
-   A final constraint was lack of time and money. This was especially evident in the voluntary sector where dependence on short-term external funding, subject to competitive bidding, was a key constraint in collaborative work with troubled young people.

Nevertheless the research findings suggest that the benefits to pupils and to the wider community from the different models of collaboration were considerable:

-   the opportunity to develop a broader curriculum;
-   making available school facilities to the wider community;
-   access to a wider range of skills and expertise;
-   the coordination of a range of different services which contribute to educational work in communities;
-   the growth in adult confidence which develops from the wider conception of their role as educators;
-   the development of employment as a way out of poverty through a range of programmes;
-   an understanding that the school is part of the community and the recognition of the complementarity of the contribution that each can make to the other.

The Local Authority Context

The management structure in local authorities has had an effect in each area on the strategic planning for community education as provided through the community education service and through community and voluntary groups. Severe budget cuts, on top of local government reorganisation in 1995, have led local authorities to experiment with new management structures, only some of which have been successful in developing and implementing new policies for the delivery of community education.

The role of the Community Education Service varied across and within local authorities. In some areas there was an emphasis on the *strategic development* of work in terms of commissioning, monitoring and evaluating the services provided by community and voluntary groups. In other areas community education service workers were *involved directly* in the provision of community education.

There was a diversity of perceptions among local authority managers of the purpose of community education, some aiming for universal provision, others targeting resources on areas and initiatives. There was also a diversity of arrangements for the delivery of community education.

The general reduction in funding had led to a review of priorities in the Community Education Service and new ways of working had been introduced. Several authorities had focused on the development of home-school-community links. Some schools in these areas were being encouraged and supported by the authority to develop parental education through projects run by Community Education Service which promoted parental involvement in their children's education and in community organisations.

With the development of inter-departmental cooperation, several case study authorities were developing links between the Community Education Service and Departments of Economic Development to provide vocational training for adults and young people which would support regeneration and provide continuing education. In addition, new approaches were being developed in youth work to give young people more »voice« in the affairs of institutions and the community.

The relationship between councillors and their communities was also changing. Local authorities were searching for new ways to consult and involve their local communities: councillors in some areas were more involved in meeting local representatives and seeing for themselves the outcomes of local projects. The Community Education Service was perceived as having a strategic role to play in supporting community participation in emergent forums which, in some local authorities, were taking on a central role in local democratic renewal.

Overall, strategic thinking by local authorities on the relationship between schools and community education was at an early stage of development. Consequently many collaborative activities between schools and community education were being developed in practice-based environments without the support of a council policy.

Frameworks for Understanding the Variety of Practice

The analysis of the data relating to collaborative practice in schools and the pattern of provision in local authorities lead to the conclusion that differing conceptions of the purposes of community education, and the structures required to fulfil these purposes, turn on two fundamental dimensions of practice:
- institutional boundaries;
- pedagogic purpose.

Underpinning these dimensions were different ideas about the role of local authorities in encouraging participation in local decision-making. In addition the rather different, even rival, professional socialisation and traditions of teachers on the one hand and community education workers on the other, illuminated the analysis. First, however, a brief description of the two dimensions of practice is provided at the two levels of analysis, the school and the local authority.

Institutional Boundaries at the School Level

Each profession defines itself in terms of specialist skills and knowledge. Such specialisation helps to distinguish one profession from another. It also separates the professional from the lay member of the public. In understanding different approaches to collaborative practice it is important to acknowledge the existence of *professional boundaries* and to examine whether such distinctions of professional knowledge and skills are sharply defined or blurred.

Pedagogic Purpose and Practice at the School Level

The orientation of the community educator may be particularistic, focusing upon the personal and educational development of the individual, whether pupil, young person or adult. Alternatively it may be holistic, with a focus on the development of the community as a whole and a vision of learning as having a dual purpose in the development of both the individual and the community.

Institutional boundaries at the local authority level

Services may be organised in such a way that boundaries are certain to arise between different parts of the community education system, as between schools and the Community Education Service. Or there may be no strategic plan to bring rival departments together.

Pedagogic purpose and practice at the local authority level

Here there is a continuum of purpose and practice, ranging from an orientation towards community development which aims to encourage effective and responsible citizenship to an individualistic orientation that is concerned with universal provision of education rather than

being responsive to both the articulated and the unvoiced requirements of the community.

The relationship between these two dimensions result in a matrix of four quadrants in which the different purposes of community education can be characterised as follows:

Quadrant A: Individualistic perspective/High institutional boundaries
                (*student development*)

The purpose of community education is designed to support the work of schools and focuses upon addressing the problems which frustrate the progress in the learning of students. Institutions define roles and rules in ways which can create a boundary between the school and other professionals, and between the school and community education professionals and the community.

Quadrant B: Holistic perspective/High institutional boundaries
                (citizen development)

In this category the community education system recognises the challenges of social and economic regeneration: it is involved in education and training to enable members of the community not only to gain employment but also to improve the quality of individual lives. Yet professional and institutional traditions can still frustrate collaborative working.

Quadrant C: Holistic perspective/Low institutional boundaries
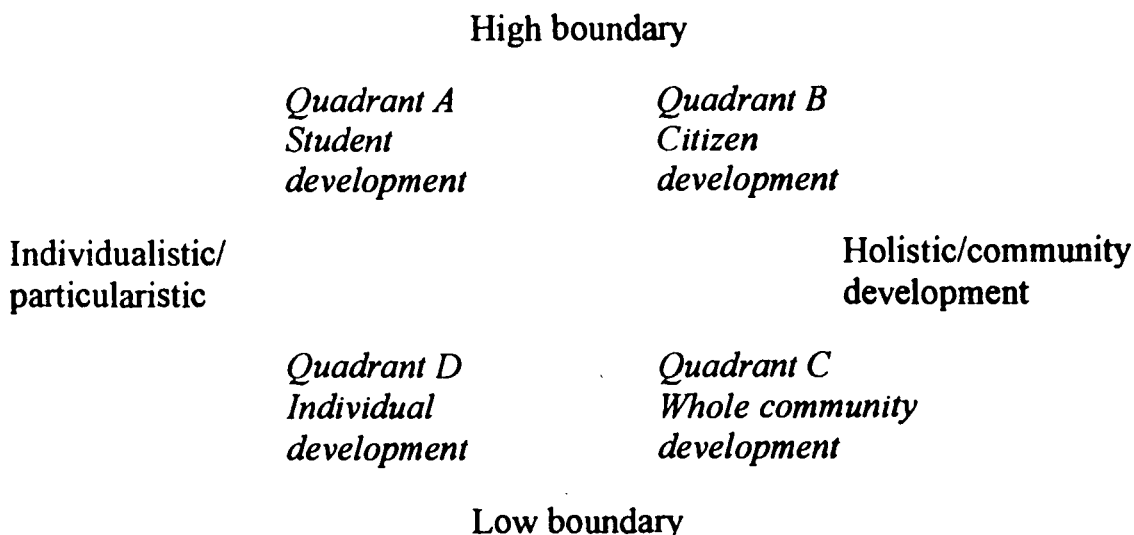   (*whole community development*)

In this perspective the local authority, the institutions and agencies recognise the importance of community development as well as life-long learning. They form collaborative partnerships to ensure effective provision of education to enable members of the community to participate as citizens in the practice of local democracy.

Quadrant D: Individualistic perspective/Low institutional boundaries
                (*individual development*)

Community education seeks to support the learning needs of all individuals in the community: pupils; young people outside school; their parents; and the lifelong learning needs of adults in the community. To support these needs institutions strive to become responsive to the

expressed needs of the community and to establish collaborative patterns of working with other organisations and agencies.

Figure 2: Pedagogic purpose and practice

High boundary

	Quadrant A Student development	Quadrant B Citizen development	
Individualistic/ particularistic			Holistic/community development
	Quadrant D Individual development	Quadrant C Whole community development	

Low boundary

Although some case studies provide examples of one model shaping the practice of the system as a whole for that area, other case studies show that different models can coexist in the same authority. The local authority may adopt a particular model in the development of its strategic policy while at the same time individual schools within that local authority area can adopt a very different model in the direct provision of education. The data suggests that the distribution of interests and power in a locality will define which model predominates.

In examining the data, it was found that working partnerships always involved the agency of the people who were working together and the structures which made such interactions possible. Using the framework developed above, the key factors in particular models of partnership in community education are described and summarised in the following section.

High boundaries are the result of:
-   management organisation and process where the two partners have separate spheres of operation;
-   declining resources which make it necessary for the partners to concentrate on what is considered their core business;

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- situations where professional roles are in conflict;
- divergent views on the role of the participants in the activity, or the providers of the service, or both;
- different groups being given priority by the partners in the collaboration, for example, only the parents of pupils attending the school or only people living in poverty.

Low boundaries are the result of:
- management organisation and processes which place value on joint decision-making by the various partners;
- a commitment by institutions to collaborative working which includes the wider community;
- institutional responsiveness to the articulated views of the community;
- a shared view of the roles of either participants in the activity, or the providers of the service, or both;
- an appreciation of the strengths to be gained from the complimentary roles of professionals workers.

An individualistic approach is the result of:
- an emphasis on the individual growth of participants;
- no means for the community to raise problems of concern to them;
- not involving people in decision-making;
- not utilising or valuing the skills of the community;
- universalistic, individually focused provision;
- predetermining policy and practice objectives;
- a focus on income generating work that is responsive to the demands of the most articulate.

A community development approach is the result of:
- having mechanisms for, and a commitment to, responding effectively to the issues and problems identified by the community;
- the community having control over, or at least influence on, decision-making and having the structures in place that allow such decisions to be implemented;
- having methods for developing the »voice« of socially excluded groups and communities;

a commitment to community participation in decision-making that leads to responsive, demand-led provision.

Overall, then, the analysis suggests that it is possible for partnerships to exist in a wide range of circumstances and situations but that these are much more likely to be developed and sustained where boundaries are low and a community development approach is taken. Such collaborative partnerships are more likely to encourage the development of democratic participation in local communities. This development will help to overcome the barriers faced by those currently excluded from lifelong learning and thus contribute to the task of tackling social exclusion (see Peshkin, 1995; Ranson, 1994).

Discussion: Towards a Vision of Community Education

In the global age of information technology, learning will be at the centre for individuals, institutions and communities, as all will need to acquire new skills and capabilities to equip them for a world of continuing change, risk and uncertainty. The research findings suggest that community education is particularly well placed to address the needs of the learning age, that is of developing the capabilities of individuals, of reaching out to build networks of collaborative learning and support, and of enabling community development and democratic renewal. The essence of learning in such a learning society is for citizens to recover their sense of agency, to learn to take more control over their lives and to work cooperatively with others to renew their communities (see SCEC, 1995).

Discussions with teachers, local authority managers, community educators, and voluntary organisations about who community education is for reveal a variety of purposes. Some are concerned that community education is seen as having only a social welfare function and targeted only at the poor, when it should be accessible to all. Others, however, argue that in an ideal world community education would be for everyone but that in terms of available resources and local authority and government priorities, community education will need to focus ser-

vices on supporting disadvantaged communities, empowering local people by giving them the confidence and skills to participate in local decision-making within their community. This broad community-based programme often includes working in partnership with economic regeneration teams to improve job opportunities, and gives a new role in facilitating the work of decentralised committees and forums.

The findings from the case studies suggest that this need to clarify a sense of direction is leading to an emphasis on three strategic purposes:

- *Parents as partners:* professionals across the community education system are increasingly recognising the significance of parents, as complementary educators enhancing their children's learning, as partners in the management and governance of schools, and as learners, all these activities contributing to the development of the community.

- *Community development:* this involves being responsive to community needs in the widest sense, supporting local involvement in democratic processes by working with and through local organisations. Community development is about supporting and encouraging people to become actively involved in the regeneration of their area.

- *Democratic renewal:* at the heart of the new reconceptualising is the perceived potential of community education to contribute to the process of democratic renewal now underway in Scotland. Some local authorities recognise the potential; community education is an under-utilised service as far as democratic participation skills are concerned. Others have proceeded further, perceiving in an active local democracy an opportunity to build a learning partnership with the community for social and economic regeneration.

Informing the debate about meaning and purpose is an emergent reconceptualising of community education. Teachers and community education workers can express a set of purposes which captures the potential of community education to contribute to the issues which lie at the heart of social and economic regeneration. This implies a commitment to:

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- inclusiveness;
- recognising social as well as academic goals;
- raising expectations through educational achievement;
- valuing complementary professional skills;
- involving local people in decision-making;
- democratic participation and active citizenship.

The community education system grows out of diverse institutions, agencies and services, each contributing their distinctive specialist knowledge and skills. It is possible for a school to be immersed in all the layers of purpose for community education and community regeneration. Yet, this research suggests that institutions and services believe there are core functions which shape all their work. Schools, for example, face statutory constraints which, in the last resort, limit what they can contribute to the community education system as a whole. However if they are to contribute their distinctive quality they need to work collaboratively in partnership with others. As Rigsby (1995: 7) argues, »a fruitful way to think about schools is to see them as structures that are intricately and irrevocably interwoven into others, all of which serve political, economic, cultural, religious and social aims.«
This study of the work of schools and of their collaborative activities shows that in each community there is a great diversity of learning needs which can only be addressed through a variety of professional skills. Plural interests and needs require the complementarity of specialisms. However, although joint professional development can reinforce the understanding and valuing of collaboration, the threats and pressures facing the community education system can accentuate the limits of professional boundaries.

Conclusion

The argument arising from the research is essentially this: schools and community education have distinct but complementary roles to play in the new Scotland in promoting active and inclusive citizenship and in combating social exclusion. However, as Merz and Ferman point out

this »will mean releasing some of the control ... that professionals have guarded for so long and [involve] learning to think of [the community education system] as an agency of the citizenry.« (1997: 98)

Schools and community education have different kinds of »core business«. Schools on their own, for example, have a limited capacity currently to promote learning to participate in a democratic community especially as the hidden curriculum of schools typically sends messages about the hierarchical and status driven nature of school organisation with few opportunities for pupil involvement in decision-making. This means that democratic renewal depends on a dual commitment by the new Scottish state: not only to use schooling to help to prepare young people to become democratic citizens but also to support and enhance people's capacity in civil society to be active citizens in a democracy - education needs communities as much as communities need education.

The full potential of schools and community education can therefore only be realised when they are both seen as essential elements within a coherent and comprehensive *community education system*, i.e. understood as a way of organising education and making available opportunities for learning throughout life which is relevant and responsive to all communities of interest, aspiration and need (see Martin, 1995). If democracy is to be renewed in Scotland, education, always a key signifier of cultural identity, must be at work in the lives of its diverse communities - in order, ultimately, to promote the common life in community (see Scottish Office, 1998). Such a learning society demands a commitment to the kind of dialogue that has always been part not only of the philosophy and pedagogy of community education but also of the distinctively Scottish traditions of democratic intellectualism and common sense (see MacIntyre, 1981).

The implications of this research then for schools as collaborative communities, is that they cannot open up the lifeworld of democratic decision-making for citizens by themselves. However, an approach to community education which is: learner centred; focused on collective, rather than individual learning and development; and derives its curriculum from the lived experience of communities; can make a difference. If opportunities for lifelong learning which are relevant and responsive to all communities are to be made available, then schools and

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community based providers need to work together to create a comprehensive community education system that is truly dialogical.

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